

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-28 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1, 3 and 24 are amended. In addition, claims 6, 14, 15, 17, 18, 22, 23 and 27 are withdrawn from consideration. The rejoinder of these withdrawn claims is respectfully requested in the event that the examiner finds that generic claim 1 is patentable in view of the above amendments and the following comments.

In paragraph 5 of the Office Action claims 5 and 24 were objected to based informalities. Regarding claim 5, applicants respectfully submit that claim 5 was amended in the Preliminary Amendment to depend from claim 1 only, and that the number "4" is actually struck through, although the line is too faint and coincides with the cross portion of the number "4". Dependent claim 24 is amended to clarify that it depends only from claim 1. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-5, 7-13, 16, 19-21, 24-26 and 28 were rejected under 35 USC §112, second paragraph. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 3 are amended for clarity only to address and obviate the rejection. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-5, 7-13, 16, 19-21, 25, 26 and 28 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) over Mena (U.S. published patent application 2002/0085778; corresponding to U.S. patent 6,485,180) in view of Morita et al (U.S. patent 4,513,990). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is directed to

A sliding bearing comprising:

a cylindrical bearing body; a plurality of sliding surfaces provided on an inner peripheral surface of said bearing body and spaced apart from each other in a circumferential direction;

a first slit portion provided in said bearing body and extending in an axial direction from one end face of said bearing body toward another end face of said bearing body;

a second slit portion provided in said bearing body and extending in the axial direction from the other end face of said bearing body toward the one end face of said bearing body; at least one groove portion provided in an outer peripheral surface of said bearing body; and

an elastic ring which is fitted in said groove portion in such a manner as to radially outwardly project partially from the outer peripheral

surface of said bearing body and to reduce a diameter of said bearing body.

With this structure, when the bearing body is inserted into a tube and fitted to an inner peripheral surface of one end portion of the tube, the elastic ring projecting from the outer peripheral surface of the bearing body undergoes elastic deformation with an interference with respect to the inner peripheral surface of the tube, therefore the bearing body is capable of absorbing dimensional errors of the tube in such as the roundness of its inside diameter. As a result, it is possible to support the shaft smoothly and effect linear motion or rotation of the shaft more smoothly.

Mena discloses an expandable rack bushing 30 that comprises a cylindrical inner wall surface 34, front slots 40 and rear slits 48. However, Mena does not disclose at least one groove portion provided in an outer peripheral surface of the bearing body, and an elastic ring that is fitted in the groove portion in such a manner so as to radially outwardly project partially from the outer peripheral surface of the bearing body and to reduce a diameter of the bearing body, as recited in claim 1.

Instead, Mena states that "[e]ach of the rear slots 48 has a rear slot end wall 50 that is in a rear slot end wall plane 52." See page 2, paragraph [0020], lines 3 and 4 of Mena. Accordingly, Mena does not disclose a groove portion "50" as stated by the examiner. Morita et al does not make for this deficiency. Morita et al discloses a bushing structure 10 comprising an annular resilient member, and axial stop members 22 press fitted on an outer periphery of opposite axial end portions of the annular resilient member 20. However, Morita et al does not disclose either at least one groove portion provided in an outer peripheral surface of the bearing body, or an elastic ring that is fitted in the groove portion in such a manner so as to radially outwardly project partially from the outer peripheral surface of the bearing body and to reduce a diameter of the bearing body.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Claim 24 was objected under 35 USC §103(a) over Mena in view of Morita et al, and further in view of Sakairi et al (U.S. Patent 5,669,718). This rejection is respectfully traversed at least for the reason that claim 24 depends from claim 1, and is patentable by virtue of that

dependency and the further features it recites. Sakairi et al does not make up for this deficiency, nor was it relied upon for such according to the Office Action.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

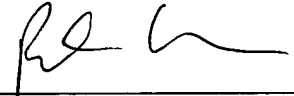
In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that all the claims are patentable and that the entire application is in condition for allowance.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further is desirable to place the application in better condition for allowance, he is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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